

**PROUD MOM**

Linda J. Ford of Jeff Anderson Regional Medical Center holds a picture of her son, Sgt. John Darren Ford, a Army Guardsman deployed in the Middle East.

PHOTO BY PAULA MERRITT  
THE MERIDIAN STAR



## It's my son who is over there fighting for you

*Linda J. Ford is a switchboard operator at Jeff Anderson Regional Medical Center. Her son, Sgt. John Darren Ford, is a member of Company B of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 150th Combat Engineer Battalion in Quitman. In this story, Linda talks about why she displays yellow ribbons on her truck.*

By Linda J. Ford  
special to The Star

I have three magnetic ribbons that I display on the back of my gold 1998 Nissan truck. I pray that this will be a reminder to everyone who sees them to remember to pray for our military daily.

I know that most people are like me. As I drive behind a vehicle, sit behind one at a stop light or just pass by, I am trying to read what is on the ribbons. Prayer is the key to change. If every

American would spend just a minute or two each day in prayer for our country and our troops, it would make a difference.

One ribbon I have says, "Pray for our Troops." This ribbon is to honor all military troops everywhere.

Company B of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 150th Combat Engineer Battalion, in Quitman, is especially close to my heart. This unit is a very close-knit bunch of special guys. Most of them have been together a long time. I love and respect all of you, your courage and your dedication. I also pray for you every day!

Another ribbon says, "Pray for my Soldier," and the last ribbon says, "Keep My Son Safe" — and there isn't any doubt who my soldier is!

My soldier is my son, Sgt. John Darren Ford. Darren is 34 years old and he is my only son. Of course, he is a

member of the Quitman unit I am so proud of.

Since being deployed from Camp Shelby on Jan. 10, we have kept in touch by phone. The lines are long at the phone banks set up for the soldiers to call home and sometimes this makes it difficult. Of course, we have e-mail. Thank heaven for e-mail! Darren is currently in Kuwait awaiting transfer to the duty station where he will serve for one year.

I also display an American flag on my dash as a reminder that we are 100 percent American.

We believe in the American way of life. We believe in God and our country. We believe in our president, George W. Bush, and the mission for which we are fighting. We do not want terrorism to change the American way of life.

If you do not share my belief, just don't tell this mother about it. It's my son who is over there fighting for you.

"I enjoy cutting the ribbons and separating the arm bands. It makes me feel that I have a small part in honoring our servicemen."

Bennie Harris



Harris

"I am glad to help in any way an old lady can be of help. We cut ribbons to tie to the tree."

Josephine Bradshaw

"A great patriotic idea."

J.W. Bradshaw



Dalton

"I think this is wonderful ... Don't lose hope. We hope and pray the end of the war is near."

Sadie Dalton

"We should keep up recognizing our veterans. Not only once a year, but every day. Daily prayer for our troops is a must. As a veteran, I appreciate the efforts of the general community to recognize the work that has been done to keep our country free ... Try not to lose faith. Keep going and we thank all of you for what you are doing."

Connie Byers

### SPEAK UP

*The residents of Aldersgate Retirement Community in Meridian have helped with the ribbons on the Memory Tree on Veterans Day for several years. This year, they cut all 60,000 yellow ribbons. Here's how they feel about participating in this annual observance.*

"It's the right thing, if it helps."

Marcelene Kyle

"I'm proud and happy to do my small part that will remind others that we still have young men and women who are in harm's way."

Dorothy Mitchell



Kyle

"I feel that is a way of showing that we all remember them and care about them."

Kressen Holloway

*Deborah Swann compiled this Speak Up question. She is the program director at Aldersgate Retirement Community and has had the privilege of working with the elders at Aldersgate for almost 17 years.*